



WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF LICENSING

The Commercial Driver License (CDL) Program

On a somewhat clear morning, two University of Washington scientists drove to the coast to retrieve critical data equipment. Unfortunately, they never made their destination. On Highway 101 near Hoquiam, state investigators believe an overloaded truck traveling at an unsafe speed crossed the center line and dumped logs in front of the car. The scientists were killed instantly.

This could easily be your story. Today, there are more than 188,000 licensed commercial drivers in Washington State. All commercial vehicle drivers are required to have a Commercial Driver License (CDL).

The Department of Licensing (DOL) recently implemented an aggressive CDL compliance program. We discovered the following issues:

- Out-of-state customers are “flipping” or transferring a CDL obtained in Washington to their home state.
- Washington has limited residency requirements to obtain a license.
- Washington relies solely on contracted Third Party Testers (TPT) rather than DOL staff, to conduct CDL skills testing.

These issues have resulted in unqualified customers being licensed to operate a commercial vehicle, and pose a significant concern to public safety and possible risk to national security.

CDL program staff identified through compliance activities and annual TPT audits additional issues of improprieties and possible fraudulent testing practices. In response, the program randomly selected customers to conduct a retest of their driving skills. This retest effort resulted in 94% of these customers failing one or more components of the test, and CDL licenses were revoked.

This bill allows the Department to hire staff to supplement and reduce the use of TPTs with state employees to conduct around 60% of the CDL skills tests. It also sets up minimum training requirements and requires proof of state residency for customers applying for a Washington commercial license. These measures, along with the previous authority to maintain a compliance program and implementing necessary business practices, will ensure we license only qualified commercial drivers and reduce the risk of fraud.



CDL Program Facts

- 188,000 endorsed CDL customers
- Renewals changed from a four-year to five-year cycle in 2005
- Issue 9,000 CDL endorsements annually
- Renew more than 30,000 each year
- \$10 fee to add CDL endorsement to driver license
- Divided into three size classes: A, B, and C

dol.wa.gov

Proposed commercial driver license legislation amends RCW 46.25.060

Section 1:

Permits the Department to set CDL test fees by rule. Current law limits fees for CDL exams given by the Department to \$50. The Department intends to assume some of the CDL testing duties currently contracted out to third-party testers. Raising the exam fees will offset the costs of assuming these duties. This change would be effective July 1, 2007.

Section 2:

Requires applicants for an original CDL provide proof of residence in the State of Washington and evidence of satisfactory training in the operation of a Commercial Motor Vehicle (CMV). Training would be waived for applicants who are transferring a CDL from another state. This change would be effective in January 2008.

Section 3:

Declares an emergency and provides that section 1 goes into effect on July 1, 2007. This permits the Department to set the fees at a level that will immediately support the request for funding for additional staff necessary to conduct CDL skills examinations.

Also provides that section 2 goes into effect on January 15, 2008. This gives the Department enough time to establish the requirements for acceptable training and proof of residency.